

1 We claim:

1 1. A method for licensing software comprising:
2 generating on a first computer a first license for software installed on the first
3 computer,
4 generating on a second computer a second license for the installed software,
5 obtaining from the second computer the second license as authorized by the
6 second computer,
7 conditionally replacing the first license with the second license,
8 periodically repeating the obtaining and replacing so that the first computer
9 remains licensed.

1 2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the first and second licenses each share a
2 unique identifier, the unique identifier associating the first and second licenses with
3 the first computer.

1 3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the first and second licenses are digitally
2 signed.

1 4. The method of Claim 1, wherein obtaining further comprises:
2 connecting to the second computer,
3 providing the second computer with at least some or all of the data from the
4 first license, and
5 exchanging the provided data from the first license for the second license.

1 5. The method of Claim 4, wherein connecting to the second computer is
2 performed using a communications network.

1 6. The method of Claim 5, wherein the communications network is the
2 internet.

1 7. The method of Claim 5 wherein exchanging includes formatting the data
2 from the first license using XML and exchanging the formatted data using the HTTP
3 protocol.

1 8. The method of Claim 2, wherein conditionally replacing further comprises:
2 matching the unique identifier of the second license to the unique identifier of
3 the first license, and if not matched discarding the second license without replacing the
4 first license, and

5 authenticating the digital signature of the second license, and if not authentic
6 discarding the second license without replacing the first license.

1 9. The method of Claim 1, further comprising verifying whether the replaced
2 license is valid, including determining whether the replaced license has expired.

1 10. The method of Claim 3 wherein digitally signed includes applying a
2 message digest algorithm to a portion of the license not including a length of the
3 license or the digital signature, resulting in a message digest, the message digest being
4 further encrypted with a binary key extracted from the unique identifier.

1 11. A licensing service comprising:
2 an enforcement agent to control the licensing for an installed software on a
3 device,
4 a license issuer to issue licenses for the installed software,
5 an service agent, in communication with the enforcement agent and the license
6 issuer, to distribute licenses from the license issuer to the device.

1 12. A license provider comprising:
 2 a license authorizer to authorize the issue of licenses for software installed on
 3 remote devices,
 4 a license issuer to issue the authorized licenses,
 5 a license distributor to distribute the issued authorized licenses to the remote
 6 devices,
 7 a license enforcer to prevent the operation of the installed software on the
 8 remote device without an authorized license.

1 13. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for
 2 performing:
 3 generating on a first computer a first license for software installed on the first
 4 computer,
 5 generating on a second computer a second license for the installed software,
 6 obtaining from the second computer the second license as authorized by the
 7 second computer,
 8 conditionally replacing the first license with the second license,
 9 periodically repeating the obtaining and replacing so that the first computer
 10 remains licensed.

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